

ASCENT
OF
MONT BLANC

Victoria R. J.

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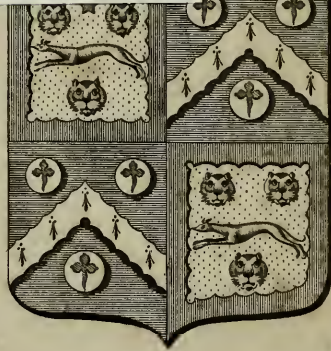
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ASCENT
TO THE
SUMMIT OF MONT BLANC,

ON THE

22nd and 23rd of August, 1837.

So pleased at first the tow'ring Alps we try,
Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky,
Th' eternal snows appear already past,
And the first clouds and mountains seem the last ;
But these attain'd, we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen'd way,
Th' increasing prospect tires our wand'ring eyes,
Hills peep o'er hills. and Alps on Alps arise.
Essay on Criticism.

NOT PUBLISHED.

LONDON,

1838.

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INTRODUCTION.

The Editor (if he may employ so large a word) of this little narrative, presents it to the reader under the following circumstances.

In the Spring of the last year, his Nephew went to Geneva for the purposes of study. By way of relaxation, he visited, in August, the Valley of Chamounix, and there accidentally met with two travellers, who were desirous to ascend Mont Blanc. He determined to join the party; and succeeded in reaching the summit. The story of his adventure, conveyed in a letter to his Brother, was read with much interest by his family and friends; and many of them having expressed, not only a desire to possess copies of it, but also an opinion that it was not unworthy of publication, he was written to on the subject. The following was his answer.

“ My dear Uncle,

“ I cannot but feel much flattered by
“ what you tell me of the favorable reception
“ given to my narrative by those who have read

“ it. With regard to printing it, my objection
“ is, that when so many better descriptions have
“ been given of the ascent, by learned and ex-
“ perienced travellers, it would be presumption
“ in a boy like me to add to the number.”

Notwithstanding this objection, so characteristically expressed, it has been decided to print a few copies for private circulation only.

Should any inaccuracies be detected, the Editor begs it may be borne in mind, that his Nephew, being still abroad, has had no opportunity for revision. He has preferred giving it as it is, to waiting for any correction which his Nephew might make on his return ; from a fear that the “ limæ labor” might impair what he considers one of the chief charms of the tale—its freshness.

What is given in the form of Appendix, (with the exception of the List of Ascents,) consists of extracts from letters since written to various members of the family.

J. G. C.

*Barton Court,
near Newbury.*

ASCENT,

§c. §c.

*Plongeon près Genève,
Sept. 9, 1837.*

MY DEAR EDWIN,

You see I fulfil my promise to write to you, though I believe I am first pledged to send a French letter to my Sisters; but I have two reasons for not doing so,—first, because I cannot yet write French well enough to express myself as I would wish; and secondly, because I have rather an interesting subject to write upon, which I think I cannot address better to any one than to you.

To be brief, I have been to the Top of Mont Blanc.

I know perfectly well that you will blame me for having done a foolish thing ; and I feel that I have great reason to be thankful to God for having preserved my life through the perilous enterprise. I am perfectly conscious that I am to blame, as I know it is wrong to risk life, as I have done, when it can be well avoided ; and I am now well aware, that the unwise reason why I attempted the ascent was, that I thought it of its kind, the most difficult and dangerous exploit to perform in Europe.

Your forgiveness, however, I am sure of, and it only remains for you to secure the forgiveness of the rest of the family, and of my Uncle ——.

About three weeks ago I went to the Valley of Chamounix, at the foot of Mont Blanc, with three Englishmen ; Capt. G. son of Sir T. G., a Mr. G. who is living at Plongeon, and Mr. W., a Naval Officer. We started at four o'clock in the morning, in a sort of cab, and arrived at Chamounix at eight the same evening. The next day we went to see the Mer de Glace, and the following day returned home.

I was not satisfied with my trip, because my companions were all in such a hurry, and did not sketch ; and it requires three or four days to see the Valley of Chamounix, the beauty of which you must have heard of.

I was so struck with the grandeur of the scenery of the Alps, that I resolved, soon after my return, to make a trip, with a knapsack on my back, to the same place again.

William had been absent about a week with a party to see St. Bernard, and make the tour of Mont Blanc at the foot, and return by Chamounix, when I set off a second time, expecting to find him at the latter place.

I left Geneva at six o'clock in the morning, on the 20th of August, by the Diligence for St. Martin. We arrived there at half-past six in the evening, having stopped on the way three hours, to see the celebrated Grotte de Balme.

This Grotto is situated in the side of a mountain, on the road from Cluse to St. Martin, and is 700 feet above the Valley. The opening is about 12 feet high by 20 wide, and it extends 1500 feet into the interior.

When we arrived at St. Martin, the hostess at the inn tried to persuade me that it was too late to set out for the Valley of Chamounix, and that the paths over the mountains were difficult to find ; but I knew she only wanted my custom, so I was determined to proceed ; and strapping my knapsack on my back, I offered my services as guide to four Frenchmen, who were my companions in the Diligence, and who had never been that way before : not one could speak a word of English.

After walking about an hour, it began to grow dark, but the stars shone beautifully, and we began to ascend the mountain. It was curious that soon after we left St. Martin we passed William and his party. They were in a carriage, and one of them, a German Baron, declared afterwards that he saw me, but did not say anything at the time, because he was not sure, *and thought it might be my ghost.*

In about two hours we arrived at a little village called Servos, where we had some bread and cheese and beer, which, by the bye, was all the dinner I had that day.

After resting half an hour, we again set forward, walking through a most romantic country. The full moon now arose above the snowy top of Mont Blanc, and threw her silvery rays on our little silent party winding its way among the rugged rocks. On our left was a precipice several hundred feet deep, at the bottom foamed the rapid Arve. We had to wade through several mountain streams, and after three more hours we arrived at half-past twelve, very much fatigued, at Chamounix; six hours from our quitting St. Martin. We repaired to our several inns; myself to the Couronne, the Frenchmen, I know not whither.

I had not the least intention to ascend Mont Blanc when I started from home, and merely meant to wander about the Alps. The next day I thought I would go only half way up, and signified my intention to the chief guide; but happening by chance to meet with an Englishman named Pidwel, and a Swedish Officer of Artillery named Hedrengen, who had agreed to attempt the whole ascent, I changed my mind, and resolved to accompany them the

whole way. I hate to do things by halves.

The day was spent in procuring guides, of whom we were to have ten, and provisions and other things requisite for the journey of three days.

I did not see much of my fellow adventurers in the course of the day, as they were at the Hotel d'Angleterre. In the evening we took a walk together into the corn fields, to see the sun set on the mountain. P.'s wife, who appeared young, accompanied us, but knew nothing then of our design. I think she suspected something from an observation I made, not being aware that he wished to keep her ignorant of our intentions, but H. stopped me, and after they had left us informed me of it.

Michel Balmat, our chief guide, had been hired the day before by some visitors, to conduct them to some part of the Valley, but after he had been chosen as our Captain he begged to be allowed to pass the day with his family; the same was also the case with several other guides. This, and what I observed of their general deportment, convinced me that it was a very

perilous undertaking. They displayed no eagerness. There was a solemnity in their countenances and in the manner in which they laid their plans. They collected in little groups about the village, and consulted in a low voice.

On my return to my hotel, I found several Gentlemen who came to wish me success, and expressed their surprise that I should make the attempt, never having ascended a mountain before, and not knowing what a glacier was to walk upon. Some dissuaded me, and some persuaded me. Among those who most dissuaded me was the young Countess K., who started with her father and mother that afternoon for Geneva. She begged and prayed me not to go. The Count said very little, but her mother seemed rather to admire my resolution. I sent a note by them to William, to inform him of my intentions.

I spent an hour with an Irish Gentleman, named B., who was very attentive to me. He read to me while I was at dinner the history of the ascent of Count de Tilly, who had his legs frozen; and assisted me in making notes, that I

might compare his account with my own observations. He also offered to make my Will ; and told me by way of consolation, that if I were lost, and my body found again after an interval of ten years, it would be easily distinguished.

I studied the Panorama of Mont Blanc, and made up my mind to conform in every thing to the instructions of the guides, who were all men of tried courage and presence of mind ; and not to trust to my own judgment.

Every thing being settled, by nine o'clock I retired to bed to meditate on the dangers I was about to encounter. I had read many accounts of persons who had failed in the attempt ; some of them had their feet frozen, some had lost their sight, some became senseless from the effect of the rarefaction of the air in such elevated situations. But I am drifting from my account.

The next morning, after a sleepless night, I arose at four o'clock ; a most beautiful morning ; and every thing looked propitious. Some time was spent in collecting our things, which the guides carried in knapsacks, and after taking some breakfast, at a little before seven we

set forward, all the village being assembled to wish us “*bon voyage*.”

This was [the order of march : six porters went first, carrying the knapsacks ; these men were only to go part of the way, to help the guides, and they left us as soon as the danger commenced ; six guides went next ; then H., P., and myself followed ; then four more guides, and five or six volunteer peasants brought up the rear ; all walking in file, with long poles in our hands.

We arrived thus at the Hameau des Pele-ri-los, where Coutet the guide lives, and then passed the Bois des Pelerins. Here every thing was in a state of devastation from the effect of the torrents, which in their furious course destroy all vegetation.

In half an hour we began to ascend the mountain, and after climbing for about two hours, passing a few chalets, the refuge of shepherds when overtaken by storms, we arrived at a little narrow path made by the goats, about a foot wide, overhanging a tremendous precipice, and on the other side a perpendicular rock. I

am thankful that I could keep my head steady, and even look down without its turning.

We then had to cross a dangerous torrent, le Torrent de Mimont. We were obliged to jump on a little narrow point of rock in the middle of it, while it roared and foamed at our feet with immense violence; the loose and slippery stones too, all about, made it very dangerous. I placed my pole firmly on a rock, and sprung across safe.

After climbing some very steep rocks, we arrived at eleven o'clock at the Pierre de l'Echelle, where we stopped an hour and ate some breakfast.

This rock, about 20 feet high and 40 broad, is situated below the Aiguille du Midi. From it we had a very extended view, and could distinguish the line of the Jura, a great part of Savoy, and part of the Vale of Chamounix at our feet.

We found much vegetation here, Rhododendron in abundance, some plants, called in the patois of the country Bellosse, and Whortleberries which were good to eat; we also found



HALT AT THE PIERRE DE L'ECHELLE.

J. Neherdoff Lith.

pieces of crystal and spar. On our left we heard distinctly the torrents of the Glacier des Bossons, which we were approaching, and having launched with our feet a mass of granite, it fell with a thundering noise and a remarkable echo.

I amused myself, and the guides much, by taking a rough sketch of the group, not omitting a little dog belonging to Michel Balmat, which accompanied us the whole way, and was the first dog that ever reached the top of Mont Blanc. It was astonishing to see this little animal, which had evidently been trained for the purpose, mounting the steep rocks like a chamois.

After admiring the view for some time, we proceeded. We suffered much from thirst, and I cannot describe with what delight we slaked it with the cool water which emerged from the glaciers.

In half an hour we entered on the dangerous passage of the Glacier des Bossons, which is an immense valley of ice, about three quarters of a mile broad where we passed it, full of tremen-

dous chasms and crevasses, some 400 feet deep. The Mer de Glace gives but a faint idea of this famous glacier.

Soon after we entered it our Porters left us, and I must confess it was a trying moment. The feeling with which they bade us and their compatriots adieu, the hearty shake of the hand, and the earnestness of their countenances were very striking.

I now walked between David Folliquet and Michel Balmat. The former took me by the hand, and pressing it told me that my best chance was to trust to him. "C'est la premiere fois," I said, "que j'ai marché sur un glacier, je mets toute ma confiance sur votre main." "Nous pressons nos mains en amitié," he replied.

It would take much time to describe the difficulties we encountered in crossing this glacier, and its grandeur, and its beauties. We had to walk upon ice with frozen snow on the top, very slippery, climbing hills heaped one upon another, and every minute we had to jump a crevasse about four feet wide, of great depth,



PASSAGE OF THE GLACIER DES BOSSONS .

J. Neherdijf Lubog:

and gradually decreasing in width till it met at the bottom. Sometimes we had not more than a few inches to place our feet on, trusting only to our balance ; on both sides a tremendous crevasse. I recommended myself to the mercy of Him who can preserve us in all dangers, and planting my nailed shoes in the steps of my guide, proceeded rapidly across. This was the only way to preserve my balance ; had I stopped I should have been inevitably lost. Then we had to cross a wide chasm by means of a small ladder, the guides holding out their hands to help us. (*a.*)

I preferred keeping in the rear, that I might follow the path which the majority took ; P. and H. kept in advance. I may mention that they had both lived long in Norway, and were used to climbing.

I now come to the worst part of my story. We had to jump a crevasse, the opposite side of which was higher than the one from which we took the spring, and the guides cut a small hole in the hard snow, into which we were to place the foot in springing across. Now this hole of

course was much enlarged, and the snow much weakened by the pressure of ten or twelve feet before it came to my turn, and, as ill luck would have it, it broke down just as I was taking my spring. I never shall forget my feelings when I found myself on the point of slipping into an abyss, I suppose 200 feet deep, not three feet wide at the bottom. I thought I was leaving the world behind me; when David Folliquet, throwing a cord over him, sprung after me at the risk of his own life, and seizing me by the collar, we were drawn up together. Had he not thus saved me, I should have been dashed to pieces against the sharp projecting points of ice.

I was then joined by a cord, and kept hold of the hand of one of the guides.

Sometimes we had to descend into vast caverns by the small ladder, large masses of ice impending over our heads. Yet it was very beautiful to look into these immense halls lighted up by the rays of the sun, with arches, galleries, and pyramids of ice reflecting the most beautiful colours. (*b.*)

I now put on my green spectacles and veil,

for I began to find the glare very painful. After climbing a wall of ice 30 feet high, we arrived at the foot of the rocks called the Grands Mulets, which appear isolated in the middle of the glaciers, like a light-house in the midst of the sea ; about 300 feet high and nearly perpendicular. They were separated from the glacier by a chasm, across which we had to jump, and then cling to a piece of rock which jutted out : this required the greatest caution, and I was obliged to relinquish my pole in ascending the rock. I kept behind Folliquet, to whom I was attached by a cord. We were frequently retarded by the little dog, and heartily wished him at the bottom of the glaciers.

It took us an hour and a half to ascend, the rocks being very dangerous from their looseness. Half-way up we discovered Chamounix, whence we supposed many eyes were turned towards us. (*c.*)

We passed a terrible place by the help of a cord ; this was a wall of ice, like a frozen waterfall between two rocks. It was necessary to cut holes with an axe for us to place our feet

and hands in. The chief guide went first, and stretched a cord for us to hold by. We then all followed in succession.

When we were nearly 300 feet above the glacier we turned to the right, and arrived, to my great delight, at what Folliquet told me was to be our auberge for the night. It was now half-past four. (*d.*)

The weather was beautiful, the sun hot, and there were white clouds in the horizon which soon began to disperse and scatter themselves far below our feet, concealing Chamounix from our view, but opening to us the Lake of Geneva like a little white streak, the line of the Jura, and a great extent of France. (*e.*) We were more than 9300 feet above the level of the sea, and it is here that most travellers are contented, and return home.

I will now describe what was to be our situation for the night.

There was a little platform, about ten or twelve feet long and four wide, on one side a precipice of nearly 300 feet, on the other a perpendicular rock, with a parapet of loose stones



BIVOUAC ON THE GRANDS MULETS

J. V. Mathercliff Lithog.

Apr 21

on the side of the precipice. On this parapet the guides placed seven poles, which rested in a slanting direction against the rock ; over these they extended a sheet about four feet from the ground.

After having made our arrangements for the night, we ate our dinner outside the tent, with our legs hanging over the precipice. Our meal consisted of cold mutton, black bread, and cheese, (no salt), Vin de St. George, brandy, and melted snow.

After having dined with good appetite, we drank some toasts, and the guides sung songs, to which the echoes of Mont Blanc responded. H., who had a fine voice, and good taste for music, sung with P. the song of the Chasseurs of Norway.

Very often our merriment was checked by a crash on our left like the sound of the loudest thunder, which made us start forward and turn our eyes in that direction. These were "Avalanches," about a hundred yards off, which fell as you see a shoot of stones fall out of a cart, bringing down immense masses of ice and rock,

and leaving a vapour behind. We were in no danger from them, being so high above the glacier; but we ran the risk of being crushed by the fall of the loose rocks above us.

During this time the sun set, in a superb crimson tint, over France; and the snows of Mont Blanc appeared quite red from the reflection. This lasted about half an hour, and then gradually disappeared.

The cold began now to be piercing. We looked at the thermometer, it was at 27; in twenty minutes it fell 15 degrees; in ten minutes more it was at 5 below Zero of Reaumur. I hastened to put on my double clothing. The guides lighted a fire, and sung their Evening Hymn. It was a picturesque sight, to see them round the fire, with their great whiskers and weather-beaten countenances, seated on the black rock in the midst of eternal snow. The solitude seemed to be immense. (*f.*)

It being now dark, I crept under the covering, and wrapping myself in a blanket, laid down on the hard rock, my companions and four of the guides doing the same, the

covering being only sufficient to shelter seven persons ; the others slept in different parts of the rock. I was wedged in between my friend P., who had an India-rubber pillow, and Matthieu Balmat, without room to turn, and only four feet to stretch my legs out.

I did not close my eyes all night ; the roar of the avalanches on all sides, like thunder, preventing me. Every thing was quiet as death for the space of twenty minutes ; then an avalanche fell which lasted about a minute. I thought of my home—of all that is most dear to me.

The avalanches mostly fell from the Dome de Gouté, l'Aiguille du Midi, and Mont Maudit ; all peaks in the range of Mont Blanc. (*g.*)

We lay very quiet through the night. H. and P. slept a little, though H. complained that the bugs disturbed him, which caused some merriment ; and we were roused, at two o'clock, by the Morning Hymn of the guides, who wished us to start as soon as possible, as the full moon was shining bright, and the heavens were

covered with stars ; below us, in the valley, were clouds and darkness.

After we had arranged our baggage and eat some frozen fowl, which took about three-quarters of an hour, we proceeded, leaving two of the peasants, who had mounted thus far.

We descended the Grands Mulets in safety, and entering again the Glacier de Tacconai, which was not difficult to pass, the snow being frozen hard enough to bear us up, directed our course towards the Dome de Gouté.

On quitting this glacier, we had to climb the Petites Montées, which appeared to be a wall of snow not more than 70 feet high, but which in fact was 300, and took us three-quarters of an hour to ascend, being nearly perpendicular.

This brought us to the Petit Plateau, where the crevasses were not so frequent, but much larger ; and we passed them by bridges of snow, formed by the avalanches which were impeded in their progress, or perhaps by drifts. Day now began to break. It was necessary to use great caution in passing over these bridges. A guide went in advance, with a cord tied round



AVAILANCHE AT THE PETIT PLATEAU .

Switzerland, 1910.



his waist, in case of accident, and proceeded very slowly, to try their solidity.

It took us half an hour to pass the Petit Plateau. We then arrived at the foot of the Grandes Montées ; which, after an hour's laborious climbing, brought us, at a quarter before seven, to the Grand Plateau.

The Grand Plateau is an immense level plain of snow, surrounded by formidable mountains of ice, and is more than 11,000 feet above the level of the sea.

After walking about three parts across the plain, we halted to take some breakfast. The guides placed their knapsacks on the ground, and produced some frozen fowls, frozen wine, and frozen bread ; all of which seemed delicious, though we could hardly gnaw them. We were obliged to walk about while eating our meal, to prevent our feet from freezing ; the thermometer being 3 degrees below Zero.

I had on a good pair of lamb'swool stockings, two pairs of gaiters, two pairs of cloth trousers, two shirts, two waistcoats, a shooting coat, and, over all, a blue woollen smock-frock, a

night-cap, three handkerchiefs round my neck, two pairs of woollen gloves, and a straw hat, from which hung a green hood. For my eyes, a pair of green spectacles, and a green gauze veil.

After stopping about twenty minutes, we proceeded in the direction of the *Petits Mulets*, leaving the *Rochers Rouges* on our left; a little refreshed by our meal.

The summit did not appear above 1000 feet above us, though in fact it was more than 3000.

On quitting the *Grand Plateau*, we turned towards *Mont Maudit*, one of the eastern points of *Mont Blanc*. Here the difficulties and dangers were very great. We had to wind along the side of a very steep declivity, at the bottom of which opened a tremendous gulf, into which a single false step would have precipitated us; and at the same time we were in dread of avalanches falling on us from above. We spoke very little, the guides telling us that they were likely to fall at the sound of the human voice.

Not far off, they pointed out the place where perished, in 1820, three brave guides of

Dr. Hamel. One of ours, Julien Devouassoux, was with them, and very narrowly escaped ; but we were not inclined to ask questions ; so we passed in silence over the crevasse where their bodies lie buried, and have never since been seen. This was the most perilous part of our route.

We ascended the Petits Mulets in a zig-zag direction, and were obliged to observe the greatest precaution, following exactly in each other's steps, and supporting ourselves by our spiked poles.

After this we took a western course, towards what travellers call the Mur de la Cote ; and now my sufferings commenced.

After quitting the Grand Plateau, I found it impossible to keep up with the others ; but they waited for me when they had climbed the Mur de la Cote, so that we ascended the last hill together.

About this time we saw an avalanche fall from the Dome de Gouté, which rolled along the track we had some time before passed. It appeared about the size of a large hay-rick. Had we been there, we should probably some of

us have perished, as, on our return, we found it partly covering our path. I marched between Folliquet and Coutet, le jeune ; and was obliged to stop every ten steps to recover my breath and rest my legs ; at the same time a lethargy came over me, with a burning thirst. I took a mouthful of vinegar every now and then to assuage it and rouse me. I bled also frequently at the nose.

Coutet was much distressed too, and Folliquet could not keep his head up. Some of those in advance were straggling about, some were lying down. At the bottom of the Mur de la Cote was reposing, stretched out at full length, one of our party. I forget whether it was one of the guides, but he joined us again. (*h.*)

Eugene Cupellin passed me here to join those in advance. “ Courage, Monsieur, nous arriverons,” he cried.

We saw two birds of a very large size, but too far off for us to distinguish what they were.

We came now to a wall of snow nearly perpendicular, and when we stopped, we had to fix

our hands and feet into the snow, with our faces against it; but I did not find it so laborious as the gradual ascent of the Petits Mulets; I should judge it was not more than 250 feet, and it occupied us about forty minutes.

I had almost despaired of reaching the summit; for as my strength became less, mountains and hills seemed to rise above me.

At the top of this hill was a plain nearly level, and here I came up to the rest of the party, who had not long arrived; the laborious work of cutting the steps in the side of the hill having greatly retarded them. P. told me that he had been very little affected by the rarity of the air, which I was astonished to hear, as he said his lungs were weak. H. too said he had not suffered much from it. (*i.*)

After about twenty minutes' rest, we placed ourselves in order, and marched in the direction of the base of our last hill, about 150 feet high. It was now about twenty minutes to ten. As we proceeded the air became so rarified, that the greater part of us were obliged to lean forward to obtain easier respiration. The snow was

pulverized ; and now and then we stepped across great cracks, which were supposed to be parts of hidden crevasses.

We now began to climb to the summit ; and after a most fatiguing ascent, stopping every two minutes to catch our breath, and using our utmost exertions, we arrived, at half-past ten, on Wednesday, the 23rd day of August, 1837, on the Summit of Mont Blanc ; eight hours after our departure from the Grands Mulets. (*k.*)

After congratulating each other on our success, we crossed over to the Italian side, which was several degrees warmer than the other. Overcome by fatigue, I wrapped myself up in a blanket, and resting my head on the lap of one of the guides, lay for half an hour in a sort of stupefaction.

There seemed to be a feeling among us that each should be alone ; and when I arose somewhat refreshed from my slumber, I found myself with two guides at the southern angle, which faced the Apennines ; H. having gone to the point facing the north, and P. to the western point ; the rest of the party were scattered



HALT ON THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT ELANC.

J. McHardy & Co. Lithog.



about. (*l.*) I then took out my note book, and asked Julien Devouassoux to point out the several places within view, whilst I wrote them down.

There I was, standing on the highest point of the Alps, higher than the wing of the eagle ever soars; having all the regions of Europe at my feet, taking down notes. I must confess that I thought myself a great man then.

The summit is more than 15,600 feet above the level of the sea, and 7300 above the line of perpetual snow. It is in the form of a hog's back, about 200 feet long, and only 30 wide. (*m.*)

The guide pointed out to me Piedmont, all the north of Italy, Monte Viso, the Maritime Alps, the Valley of ~~Lure~~ *Lure*, to the centre of the plains of Lombardy, and Milan. At the end of this vast extent he pointed out what he said was Venice, but I doubt it, like a little spot, in the corner of the Adriatic. (*n.*) I saw all the chain of the Apennines, covered with snow; numerous cities here and there; the Tyrolean Alps, the tops of the mountains of Carinthia and Carniola; nearer

to me I saw St. Gothard, and the high Pyramids of the Altens, the Munck, the Jungfrau, the Ghemmi, the Mountains of the Oberland, the Shreckhorn, the Wetterhorn, and the Eiger ; the tops of Mount Rosa, the rival of Mont Blanc, all the chain of which I, of course, saw ; the Mer de Glace, and, in the distance, le Jardin. At our feet was the Great St. Bernard, and to the right the Little ; the Allée Blanche, the Valleys of Aoste and Courmayeur. Chamounix looked like a heap of stones. I saw all the line of the Jura, the Lake of Geneva, a long extent of France, Lyons, and the course of the Rhone.

While I was musing on the scene and questioning Devouassoux, Folliquet came behind me, and shouting in my ear, asked me to come and drink a glass of Champagne, to which I answered “avec plaisir,” for I was almost dead with cold ; so I folded up my note book, and joining the party, drank to the health of our friends in England. (o.)

After stopping on the whole an hour and a quarter, we prepared to descend (to give the words which my friend H. made use of on the

occasion) “ that Mont Blanc, so terrible, so often attacked, but so seldom overcome.”

When we were all ready to start, the wind rose so suddenly, that away went my hat “ with a bound and a hop” over the Italian side ; and what with a cutting north wind, and the thermometer 7 degrees below Zero, I nearly lost my senses. I tied five handkerchiefs round my head as quickly as possible, and after taking one more look towards Italy and France, proceeded.

The descent is in some parts more dangerous than the ascent, from the liability to slip down the steep hills of snow. I had a cord round my waist, and was held back by two guides, while another took hold of my arm. (*p.*)

The descent of the Mur de la Cote was very dangerous.

We arrived at the Rochers Rouges in about one-fourth of the time it had taken us to ascend ; for sometimes I sat down on the snow, and a guide placing himself between my legs, we slid down at the rate of fifteen miles an hour.

We passed with difficulty the perfidious

snows of the Petits Mulets, and arrived in safety at the Grand Plateau; where we stopped ten minutes to refresh ourselves.

I descended one hill in five minutes which took us an hour to ascend.

We found several chasms in the snow, which we had not perceived in the morning; and were obliged to pass the crevasses of the Glacier de Tacconai with excessive caution, on account of the sun having melted the snow. We placed poles one on another, and trod with the greatest care.

At last we left the glacier with much satisfaction, and began to mount the rocks of the Grands Mulets to our former resting place, where we arrived at three o'clock P.M., three hours and a half after we left the top.

I had quite made up my mind to pass another night on the Grands Mulets; but as I found that P. and H. had intended to reach Chamounix that evening, and the guides said it was the most favorable time of the day for passing the glacier, I assented, though I was extremely fatigued, and had begun to feel the effect of the

sun on my head and face, my veil having gone with my hat, and I had much reason to apprehend a coup de soleil. The guides offered me their hats, but they would not fit me, so I did the best I could without one; and after resting an hour, eating some bread and cheese for which we had little appetite, and engraving our names on the rock with a small chisel, we began to descend the dangerous rocks in the same track by which we had mounted.

I was in advance, and when about half way down, my foot slipped from stepping on a loose stone; but I did not lose my balance, and Folliquet again saved me by placing his pole under my foot.

When we reached the glaciers, we found them quite changed, and covered with little rills of water. They were in a very insecure state, but we had the greatest good luck, and passed them in an hour and a quarter.

We took a few wrong turns, and had to retrace our steps again, and were often stopped by wide crevasses, along the brink of which we had to wind, till we found them contracted to the width of four feet, when we jumped them.

One of the guides began to suffer great pain in his eyes from the glare of the snow, not having used any precaution in covering them ; and this poor man, who has a family, I am sorry to say, lost his sight soon after his arrival at Chamounix, but if he can have proper advice I believe he may recover it. (*q.*) I was the only one who did not suffer in the eyes, owing to my having taken better care of them than of any other part of my person.

When we reached the Pierre Pointue, we were met by an interesting looking peasant girl and boy, who were carrying a basket with milk, honey, and bread, to which we did ample justice,

I was inclined to rest rather longer than my two friends, for P. was most anxious to see his wife, so they left me three guides and proceeded.

In about half an hour I set forward, and passed some chalets, where we met groups of girls, who came to meet us, and congratulate their countrymen on their good fortune.

I proceeded at my leisure, and was very happy as I approached once more the Valley,

covered with flocks, and verdure, and habitations; after having quitted those desolate regions, where even the sound of the human voice almost startled one.

At the bottom of the Mountain I met a young Lady on a mule, with her brother on foot. She very kindly dismounted, and begged me to ride; and when I declined, she offered it to Folliquet, who accepted it. Just then a man came from the Master of the "Couronne," with his best mule, which he had sent to me in compliment.

I was met by all the English who were staying at Chamounix. The Gentlemen shook hands with me, and I took the liberty of presenting the Ladies with some crystals I had collected.

As I entered the street it was so crowded with people that I could hardly make my way through them; and tired as I was, I had to shake hands with most of them, being the youngest traveller who had ever reached the summit.

It was the nineteenth ascent, and the first this year. (*r.*)

On my arrival at the inn, I immediately went to bed.

The next day several Gentlemen called upon me, to ask questions and request my name.

In the afternoon I set off for St. Martin, after taking leave of the guides, who were to have a jollification in the evening at which H. and P. were to preside. H.'s eyes were much bloodshot, and P.'s face greatly disfigured. My face and eyes were not affected, but I bled much at the nose on that and the following day, and suffered much from weakness, and in the night from dizziness in the head; but I had then no pain in my limbs.

I quitted Chamounix with regret, but was anxious to see my friends at Geneva.

When I arrived at St. Martin, I was asked if I had heard of the "joli garçon" who had perished on Mont Blanc. The Countess K.'s domestique had spread the report at all the hotels, and it reached Geneva. Seeing the distress of her mistress when we parted, she took it for granted that I must perish.

The next day I proceeded by the Diligence, and arrived at Plongeon at eight in the evening. Every body congratulated me on my safe return, and all were eager to hear my adventures ; but I was too tired to relate them.

I was laid up for nearly a week without being able to move my limbs, and lost the whole of the skin of my face, which caused me much pain ; but, by the use of warm baths and abstinence, I am happy to say, I am now perfectly recovered, and have begun my studies again.

I was very much flattered by the kind reception I met with at Plongeon on my return. There was a party of twenty-two in the house, and the next day after dinner my health was drunk.

The Countess K. in proposing it, said “ that as she was the last person of the party who saw me before my ascent, so she was now, with much greater pleasure, the first to drink my health, and congratulate me on my return ; ” and she added, “ may the same success attend you in your military career, as has attended you in your ascent of the Mont Blanc.”

I have received a certificate, signed by the Guides and the Syndic of the Commune, attesting on oath that I have reached the summit. (s.)

The cost of the ascent was 480 francs to each of us. Michel Balmat, as Chef, had 100 francs from each, the others had 40 each, and what remained was divided among them ; they were all very thankful.

My friend H. departed for Milan ; he has lost the skin of his face three times.

P. and his wife soon after came to Geneva, but he was obliged to confine himself several days, on account of his face and eyes.

Our fame has been conveyed by the newspapers, even as far as Hanover.

I thought of your rock-work in the Plantation when I was ascending, and have saved a bit of granite to contribute to it.

We found frozen butterflies at the top, which had probably been carried there by storms ; and collected some as curious souvenirs. I preserve too, as great treasures, the shoes I wore, made at Newbury, with the crampons affixed, and also my flask, given me

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by M. Alphonse Reiffer, without which I do not think I could have reached the top.

I forgot to mention, that before we started the Chief of the Guides came to take our names, and a description of our persons, in order that he might be able to make a report, in the event of any of us being lost; a measure not very well calculated to give confidence to those who were entering on a perilous enterprise.

Your affectionate Brother,

HENRY MARTIN ATKINS.

APPENDIX.

(a.) *Page 17.*

In passing along a narrow ledge, P.'s left foot slipped ; but he saved himself by fixing his pole firmly in the ice ; he would otherwise have been inevitably lost.

(b.) *Page 18.*

We followed paths shut in by nature between mountains of ice. On every side were immense caverns, into whose recesses it seemed impossible to penetrate, presenting the appearance of chrystal palaces, and exhibiting architectural forms of the greatest beauty and variety. There were saloons with transparent pillars, and arches with volutes and festoons, magnificently illuminated by a brilliant sun, the rays of which were curiously reflected, here of a white, there of a green hue.

(c.) *Page 19.*

Some of the visitors at Chamounix, and several peasants, ascended the Breven to watch our progress, and note our arrival at the top.

(d.) Page 20.

My first care here was to procure water ; and some of the guides set out with me to climb about the rocks in search of it. P. and H. contented themselves with wine, which I thought was too strong, as I had a burning thirst. We found plenty of snow, and the sun being hot, (the thermometer at 60,) it dissolved, and we caught it drop by drop ; but it was a quarter of an hour before I was satisfied.

(e.) Page 20.

We discerned Mont Buet, the Mole, part of the Lake of Geneva, then the Chain of the Jura, which stretches toward the east as far as Basle, and terminates to the west at Fort de l'Ecluse, the frontier of Switzerland. Over this immense chain our eyes glanced into the regions of France, while a most glorious sunset tinted the western horizon.

(f.) Page 22.

We heard the shrill whistle of the Marmot. We found in abundance *Asbeste longiforme*, intermixed with crystals, and a kind of green pulverized stone. I lamented that I was no mineralogist.

In the evening, Michel Balmat and Julien Devouassoux ascended the Glacier de Tacconai a little way, to examine the state of a dangerous crevasse, and also to try some treacherous ground we had to pass in the morning.

(g.) Page 23.

There was something sublime in standing there amid the silence of the night, and to feel that we were at that moment the most loftily situated individuals in Europe; while the whole scene was of a kind to raise the thoughts from ourselves to the DIVINITY above us.

(h.) Page 28.

The little dog was much affected with drowsiness after we quitted the Grand Plateau; and every time we stopped, he tried to lie down on our feet, finding the snow cold. He evinced many tokens of surprise by frequently staring about him. He would make an effort to run very fast, and then drop. With regard to his appetite, chicken bones disappeared with an amazing rapidity; but he did not appear to suffer from thirst.

(i.) Page 29.

In an expedition like this, it was "every man for himself;" and therefore we saw very little of each other, excepting at the halting places.

(k.) Page 30.

H. being ambitious to place his foot first on the summit, ran, only a few feet, and was so overcome that he lay on the snow two or three minutes, and

suffered dreadfully. He felt the effects of his ill-timed exertion during the whole time we were on the summit.

(*l.*) *Page 31.*

I sat on the snow, and gazed on the mighty panorama that was stretched at our feet. Nothing struck me so much as the gigantic range of the Alps toward the St. Gothard—their bulk—their vastness—while Mont Rosa, which only differs from the height of Mont Blanc by 100 feet, appeared a speck.

The sky, from its greater nearness, seemed of a deep blue.

(*m.*) *Page 31.*

That is not a good description of the summit. From the effect of seasons, the form of the area changes, and therefore the accounts of travellers do not correspond. I should describe it as an Isosceles triangle, the eastern and western sides being 200 feet long. The base to the north, parallel to the Valley of Chamounix, took us about 17 steps.

(*n.*) *Page 31.*

Over the plains of Lombardy there certainly appears a sort of vapour in the horizon, which we concluded was the Adriatic; and as Venice was the nearest point, if we saw the one, we might the other;

but I cannot speak with confidence of it, though Count Tilly says, "Je crus voir Venise," &c. A glance at the map will convince you that we could not see the Gulf of Genoa, though not above three-fourths of the distance, on account of the intervening Alps and Apennines. Milan was discernible.

(o.) *Page 32.*

The extreme cold, the fatigue, the dangers we had encountered, and the recollection that we must be exposed to others on our return, prevented us from enjoying the view as we should have done. It was with difficulty I could write, for now and then a dizziness came over me.

The thermometer varied; the lowest point I noticed was 7 below Zero, the highest 2 above; but I cannot say from my own observation how it stood at the several sides.

We had no inclination for food, except H. who ate.

(p.) *Page 33.*

We breathed with less difficulty as we descended, and felt so light, that we hardly seemed to touch the ground.

(q.) *Page 36.*

I am happy to tell you, that the guide who lost his sight in consequence of not having sufficiently protected his eyes, has recovered it.

(r.) *Page 37.*

Such is the history of my expedition ; and I am convinced that no one should attempt the ascent to the summit of Mont Blanc, unless induced to it by some object connected with science. The desire to enjoy a superb view, or the ambition to perform a feat of daring, are not motives sufficient to justify our own risk of life, nor the exposure of the guides to dangers, which experience has but too sadly proved not to be imaginary. Captain Sherwill, who has given a very interesting description of the high Alps, says “ Those who wish to form an idea of these solitudes, and of the beautiful views which the Glaciers present, may go to the Grands Mulets. This expedition, which is attended with little more fatigue than that to ‘le Jardin,’ possesses great interest. However, no person (he adds) should venture even thus far, who is not perfectly sure of his powers, and of his sang froid in danger.”

(s.) *Page 40.*

Nous, Sindic de la Commune de Chamounix, en Sovoie, Royaume de Sardaigne, soussigné certifions a toutes les autorités qu’il appartiendra, que Monsieur H. M. Atkins, Gentilhomme Anglais, accompagné de dix Guides de cette Commune, nommés Michel Balmat, qui a été le Chef et le directeur du voyage David Simond, Julien Devouassoux, David Coutet l’ainé, Matthieu Balmat, Eugene Cupellin, Simon Tournier, Pierre Joseph Simond, David Folliquet, et David Coutet le jeune, est parti le 22 du courant, sur

les sept heures du matin, pour l'ascension du Mont Blanc, que dans la même journée il est allé aux Grands Mulets, ou il a passé la nuit ; que le lendemain, 23, avec les mêmes Guides, il est vigoureusement parvenu à l'extrême sommite, a dix heures et quart du matin, ou il a demeuré une heure et quart pour contempler les regions de l'Europe soumises à pied ; qu'enfin après un voyage très hereux, il a été de retour a Chamounix dans son hotel a sept heures de la nuit.

En témoignage de la verité que nous publions, avec l'offre du serment, nous avons delivré ces presentes a Chamounix le 24 Août, 1837.

SIMOND, *Sindic*.

THE END

STATEMENT
OF
ALL THE ASCENTS
TO
The Summit of Mont Blanc.

1786. August 8.	Jacques Balmat and Dr. Paccard	Savoyards.
1787. August 3.	M. de Saussure	of Geneva.
— August 9.	Colonel Beaufoy.....	English.
1788. August 5.	Mr. Woodley.....	do.
1802. Aug. 10.	{ Baron Doorthesen	of Courland.
	{ M. Forneret	of Lausanne.
1812. Sept. 10.	M. Rodatz	of Hamburg.
1818. August 4.	Count Matezescki.....	Pole.
1819 June 19.	Dr. Rensselaer and Mr. Howard	Americans.
— August 13.	Captain Undrell, R. N....	English.
1822. August 18.	Mr. F. Clissold	do.
1823. Sept. 4.	Mr. Jackson	do.
1825. August 26.	Dr. E. Clark and Captain M. Sherwill.....	do.
1827. July 5.	Mr. C. Fellowes and Mr. W. Hawes	do.
— August 9.	Mr. John Auldjo	Scottish.
1830. August 3.	Captain Bootle Wilbraham	English.
1834. Sept. 17.	Dr. Martin Barry	do.
— October 9.	Count de Tilly.....	French.
1836.	Mr. Alfred Waddington	English.
1837. Aug. 23.	{ M. Hedrengen.....	Swede.
	{ Mr. Pidwel and Mr. H. Martin Atkins	English.



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